

# Basic Computer Terms

**About** – used primarily to find the version number of the application you are using. This is found in the “Help” drop down menu of most applications.

**Application** - a program in which you do work.

**BIOS (Basic Input-Output System)** - a fundamental part of any personal computing system, the BIOS contains basic system control instructions.

**Boot** - to start up a computer.

**Bug** - a flaw in a computer program or system.

**Clipboard** - a portion of memory used to temporarily store information. Also called a Copy Buffer in many PC applications because it is used to hold information which is to be moved, as in word processing where text is "cut" and then "pasted".

**Control panel** - a program that allows you to change settings in a program or change the way a PC looks and/or behaves.

**CPU** - the Central Processing Unit. The processing chip that is the "brains" of a computer.

**Crash** - a system malfunction in which the computer stops working and has to be restarted.

**Cursor** - the pointer which is controlled by the mouse.

**Database** - an electronic list of information that can be sorted and/or searched.

**Data** - (the plural of datum) information processed by a computer.

**Defragment** - (also - optimize) to concatenate fragments of data into contiguous blocks in memory or on a hard drive.

**Desktop** - your main screen.

**Dialog box** - an on-screen message box that appears when the PC requires additional information before completing a command.

**Disk** - a spinning platter made of magnetic or optically etched material on which data can be stored.

**Disk drive** - the machinery that reads the data from a disk and/or writes data to a disk.

**Double click** – clicking on your left mouse button twice, in fast succession.

**Download** - to receive a file from one computer or from the Internet.

**Drag** - to move the mouse while its button is being depressed.

**Drag and drop** - a feature on the PC that allows one to drag an icon for a document on top of the icon for an application, thereby launching the application and opening the document.

**Driver** - a program that controls (or drives) a device.

**File** - the generic word for an application, document, control panel or other computer data.

**Folder** - an electronic subdirectory, which contains files.

**Font** - a typeface that contains the characters of an alphabet or some other letterforms.

**Fragmentation** - breaking up of a file into many separate locations in memory or on a disk.

**Freeze** - a system error that causes the cursor to lock in place.

**Hard drive** - a large capacity storage device made of multiple disks housed in a rigid case.

**Highlight** - to select by clicking once on an icon or by highlighting text in a document.

**Icon** - a graphic symbol for an application, file or folder.

**Keyboard shortcut** - a combination of keystrokes that performs some function otherwise found in a pull down menu.

**Launch** - start an application.

**Left click** - clicking on the left mouse button.

**Memory** - location in which computer-based equipment stores recorded information, either permanently or temporarily. Usually measured in kilobytes or megabytes.

**Menu bar** - the horizontal bar across the top of the PC's screen that lists the menus.

**Monitor - A CRT or Flat screen** - RGB screen which accepts video signals, computer display information or both.

**Mouse** - a hand-held, rolling remote control device for a computer that guides the cursor on the computer screen.

**Multi-tasking** - running more than one application in memory at the same time.

**OS** - Operating System - the system software that controls the computer.

**Paste** - to insert text, or other material, from the clipboard or copy buffer.

**Port** - socket at which cables connecting the computer and its peripherals are attached.

**Properties** - a display of information about the selected file, folder or drive.

**Right click** - clicking the right mouse button.

**RAM (Random Access Memory)** - part of a computer's memory which can both read (find and display) and write (record) information, and which can be updated or amended by the user; the largest part of a computer's memory, used to house and execute active program code.

**ROM (Read Only Memory)** - a computer storage medium that allows the user to recall and use information (read) but not record or amend it (write). 2. (n.) The smaller part of a computer's memory, in which essential operating information is recorded in a form which can be recalled and used (read) but not amended or recorded (written).

**Root directory (folder)** - the main hard drive window.

**RGB (Red-Green-Blue)** - A type of computer color display output signal comprising separately controllable red, green and blue signals; as opposed to composite video, in which signals are combined prior to output. RGB monitors typically offer higher resolution than composite.

**Save** - to write a file onto a disk.

**Save as** - (a File menu item) to save a previously saved file in a new location and/or with a new name.

**Scroll** - to shift the contents of a window to bring hidden items into view.

**Scroll bar** - a bar at the bottom or right side of a window that contains the scroll box and allows scrolling.

**Scroll wheel** – a mouse with a scroll wheel allows you to scroll up and down a document or Web page by rolling the wheel back and forth.

**Server** - a central computer dedicated to sending and receiving data from other computers (on a network).

**Shut down** - the command from the Shut Down menu that shuts down the PC safely.

**Software** - files on disk that contain instructions for a computer.

**Spreadsheet** - a program designed to look like an electronic ledger.

**Start up disk** - the floppy disk containing system software and is designated to be used to start the computer from a floppy drive.

**Surge suppressor** - a power strip that has circuits designed to reduce the effects of surge in electrical power. (Not the same as a UPS.)

**System file** - a file in the System folder that allows your PC to start and run.

**Title bar** - the horizontal bar at the top of a window that has the name of the file or folder it represents.

**Upload** - to send a file from your computer to another through a network or the Internet.

**Virtual memory** - using part of your hard drive as though it were "RAM".